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THE COINCIDENCE OF ACCENT AND ICTUS IN THE ROMAN DACTYLIC POETS

By E. H. STURTEVANT

In *Classical Philology*, XIV, 234-44, I have applied a new criterion to the old problem whether the prevailing harmony of accent and ictus in Plautus and Terence was accidental or intentional. I determined statistically the tendency of the verse-structure to produce harmony in words of the several rhythmic types, and with this I compared the actual usage of the poets. The comparison showed that there was an effort so to place words in the line that harmony would result.

There is a similar problem as to the Roman dactylic poets.¹ It is clear that there is usually harmony of accent and ictus in the last two feet of the dactylic hexameter and that clash of accent and ictus is more common than harmony in the first four feet, but scholars are still disagreed as to whether this state of affairs is altogether a result of the Latin system of accentuation and the structure of dactylic verse, or whether the poets paid attention to accent in constructing their lines. In case we accept the second alternative there is the further problem whether their efforts were devoted solely to the securing of harmony in the last two feet of the line or whether they desired clash of accent and ictus in the first four feet.

The dactylic poets had far less choice in the matter than the dramatic poets; in iambic and trochaic verse the ictus can be placed on any syllable of almost any word (*fērunt* or *ferūnt*, *nēscio* or *nescio*), but most words can be got into dactylic verse with just one incidence of the ictus (*ferūnt*, *nēscio*). In fact the dactylic poets had free choice only in the case of words composed wholly of long syllables. For the rest their only recourse was to avoid such words as *ferunt* in case they desired harmony of accent and ictus, and to choose them in case they wanted accent and ictus to rest upon different

¹ For a brief history of the discussion see Lucian Müller, *De Re Metrica Poetarum Latinorum*², pp. 233-37. Müller fails to mention a suggestive paper by Humphreys in *Trans. Am. Phil. Assoc.*, IX, 39-58.

syllables. It should be easy to determine whether they did as a matter of fact choose words which require harmony in preference to those which require clash, or whether their choice varied between the different parts of the verse.

To secure a standard of comparison I have counted the words of the several rhythmic types containing two, three, four, or five syllables in several prose passages, namely, Caesar *B.G.* i. 7, Cicero *Cat.* i. 1-7, *Manil.* 47-49, *Cluent.* 51, Caelius ap. Cic. *Fam.* viii. 1, Livy xxi. 23, 35. I have similarly recorded the rhythmic character of from 2300 to 2500 words of each of four dactylic poets, Ennius, Catullus, Lucretius, and Vergil. Tables I, II, III, and IV give the detailed results in the form of percentages. Here and throughout this paper words are reckoned with that part of the verse in which their accented syllable falls, except that a dissyllable whose ultima receives the fifth ictus is counted as belonging to the fifth foot. Words with the rhythm $\cup \cup$ and with the rhythms $\cup -$ and $\cup \cup \approx$ with elision of the ultima are all included under the heading "Require clash of accent and ictus," although no ictus at all rests upon them. To have taken into account this variation within the types $\cup \approx$ and $\cup \cup \approx$ would have made the tables too complicated for convenience, and so I have preferred to make the necessary correction below (p. 379) in the supplementary discussion. The desire to keep the tables reasonably simple has also led me to include trochaic words with the spondees as permitting either clash or harmony. Trochaic words ending in a consonant had to be included because they are spondaic when an initial consonant follows, and it seemed unsatisfactory to separate *forma* and *mitte* from *formam* and *mittit*. I assume that such a word as *armaque* was regularly accented on the antepenult.¹

For convenience of comparison the figures in the several blocks have been added together, and they are presented in compact form in Table IV. The percentage of monosyllables has been appended; but even so the figures in each line of the table aggregate only 99 or a little more. The remainder is accounted for by the words of more than five syllables and by the decimals beyond the fourth place, which have been neglected in computation.

¹ See Shipley, *Class. Phil.*, VIII, 23 ff.

TABLE III

FEET 1-4

PERMIT EITHER CLASH OR HARMONY OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -
Ennius.....	29.58	10.83	1.55	.06
Catullus.....	25.41	18.52	1.12	.....
Lucretius.....	23.29	9.57	1.8	.....
Vergil.....	25.27	12.43	1.76	.....

REQUIRE CLASH OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -
Ennius.....	13.93	6.96	3.04	.12
Catullus.....	10.77	7.92	5.27	.06
Lucretius.....	12.36	13.04	4.29	.25
Vergil.....	14.61	9.45	4	.06

REQUIRE HARMONY OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -
Ennius.....	5.89	1.31	.3	.89	1.25	.12	.48	.....
Catullus.....	5.62	.24	.....	1.07	2.24	.....	.49	.....
Lucretius.....	5.03	.99	.06	.43	1.93	.43	.43	.....
Vergil.....	4.12	.12	.....	.12	1.94	.....	.36	.....

FEET 5-6

PERMIT EITHER CLASH OR HARMONY OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —
Ennius.....	29.15		10.49	1.1
Catullus.....	39.26		5.31	3.33
Lucretius.....	35.19		7.22	.38
Vergil.....	36.54		9.36	.38
				.26

REQUIRE CLASH OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —
Ennius.....	5.12	.73	.37	.12	
Catullus.....	41				
Lucretius.....	1.65	.51	.51		
Vergil.....	.64	.13			

REQUIRE HARMONY OF ACCENT AND ICTUS

	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —	— — — — —
Ennius.....	10.85	18.41	.73	4.15	4.88	.61	2.2	
Catullus.....	22.09	16.29	.12	7.42	2.72	.31	.41	
Lucretius.....	14.56	16.71	.63	5.44	5.57	.63	1.14	
Vergil.....	18.97	18.08	.9	5.38	2.44	.38	.26	

TABLE IV

	Impossible in hexameter	Monosyllables	Permit either clash or har- mony of ac- cent and ictus	Require clash of accent and ictus	Require har- mony of ac- cent and ictus
Prose	5.9	25.44	27.87	19.57	18.29
Complete lines					
{ Ennius		19.12	41.6	18.24	20.64
{ Catullus		14.06	45.92	16.64	22.16
{ Lucretius		19.71	37.33	21	20.9
{ Vergil		19.01	41.67	19.3	19.49
Feet 1-4					
{ Ennius		23.27	42.02	24.11	10.24
{ Catullus		20.83	45.05	24.38	9.68
{ Lucretius		25.09	34.66	30	9.3
{ Vergil		25.21	39.46	28.06	6.66
Feet 5-6					
{ Ennius		10.49	40.74	6.24	41.83
{ Catullus		1.6	47.9	.41	49.36
{ Lucretius		8.73	42.79	2.67	44.68
{ Vergil		5.09	46.54	.77	46.54

The avoidance of monosyllables in the last two feet of the hexameter by Ennius' successors has long been a commonplace; our table shows that Ennius himself used in these feet only about 29 per cent as many monosyllables as might have been expected (10.49 instead of 25.44 per cent). An examination of the hexameter cadences listed by Humphreys, *op. cit.*, p. 43, shows that the use of monosyllables tends to produce clash of accent and ictus, at least in this part of the verse; it is very likely indeed that the reason why the later poets avoided such line-ends as Ennius' *Diána Venús Mars, cúm magnís dis*, and *réstituit rem* was their desire not to do violence to the accent. But that some other influence was at work is indicated by the small number of monosyllables in the earlier part of the line. Since, as we shall see, other rhythmic types which are avoided in the last two feet are as a rule considerably more common in the first four feet than in prose, we should expect to find the percentage of monosyllables in the first four feet higher than the 25.44 per cent which represents prose usage. On the contrary all the poets examined show a lower percentage than this, and the lowest of all appears in Catullus, who most rigidly avoids monosyllables in the

fifth and sixth feet. What this further motive was which led to the avoidance of monosyllables I am not now prepared to say; and it would be unsafe to base an argument upon the statistics in the second column of Table IV until that factor has been identified.

The third column of Table IV shows that polysyllables whose penult and all preceding syllables are long were greatly favored by the dactylic poets, and that after Ennius they were particularly favored in the last two feet. As already noted, these are the words which admit either harmony or clash of accent and ictus. It is therefore likely that poets sometimes preferred, let us say, *portant* to *ferunt* in order to avoid the clash which the latter word would involve. Nevertheless there was another motive which led to the use of these words; they would fit into any position in the line, save only the second half of the fifth foot, provided they had the number of syllables required. The use of words composed of long syllables facilitated composition whatever attitude the poets took toward accent, and therefore we cannot base an argument upon the great frequency with which such words occur. We shall presently have to consider the actual incidence of the ictus upon them.

The fourth column shows that in the last two feet of the line the poets avoided the use of polysyllables which require clash of accent and ictus. As noted above (p. 374) our figures require a correction at this point; a large proportion of the words of the types $\bar{\cup} \bar{=}$ and $\bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{=}$ employed in the last two feet carry no ictus, and consequently involve no real clash at all; for example, *isque pium ex se, té neque pösse, aút etiam ipse haec*. Consequently the avoidance of $\bar{\cup} \bar{=}$ and $\bar{\cup} \bar{\cup} \bar{=}$ is even more rigid than the tables indicate; the dactylic poets, especially after Ennius, generally avoided placing in the last two feet words whose rhythm required clash of accent and ictus.

The fifth column of Table IV shows that the poets correspondingly favored words requiring harmony of accent and ictus in the last two feet of the hexameter. The difference between the 18 per cent of such words employed in prose and the 42 to 49 per cent employed in these two feet is even greater than the excess just observed in the poets' use of words composed of long syllables. Here again the tendency is clearly marked in Ennius' usage and is carried farther by his successors.

cent of all occurrences. While the structure of the verse tended to place the ictus on the penult of these words 73 per cent of the time, Vergil allowed it to stand there only 64 per cent of the time.

Our problem, however, is chiefly a matter of the last two feet. I have therefore divided the line as above (see p. 374); each word has been assigned to that part of the verse in which its accented syllable stands, except that a dissyllable upon whose ultima the fifth ictus rests has been reckoned as belonging to the last part of the verse. Counting syllable-groups and words as before, I find that the structure of the fifth and sixth feet tends to place the ictus on the penult of words of the rhythm $- \approx$ 73 per cent of the time, and that Vergil actually placed it there 100 per cent of the time. A similar calculation for the first four feet indicates a tendency for the ictus to rest upon the penult 73 per cent of the time, whereas Vergil actually placed it there only 39 per cent of the time.

Table V gives the results of similar calculations for words of the three types $- \approx$, $-- \approx$, $--- \approx$, and for the four poets, Ennius, Catullus, Lucretius, and Vergil. At the head of each block is an indication of the rhythmic group to be treated. The Roman numerals indicate the incidence of the ictus; I stands for the ultima, II for the penult, and III for the antepenult. In case a word has ictus on two syllables, only the ictus on penult or antepenult is recorded in our count. In each block the column which corresponds to the accent is printed in heavy-faced type. The third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth number in each heavy-faced column is the difference between the unhampered tendency of the verse-structure and the poet's actual usage.

The table shows that the dactylic poets tried to put the ictus on the penult of spondaic words in the last two feet of the verse, and that the tendency became stronger after Ennius. There was even greater regularity in placing the ictus on the penult of words of the rhythms $-- \approx$ and $--- \approx$, but this appears to be chiefly due to the structure of the verse. If, however, we had reckoned to the fifth foot syllable-groups and words of the rhythms $---$ and $----$ whose ultima has the fifth ictus it would appear that the poets took great pains to avoid clash of accent and ictus in these words. According to Humphreys, *op. cit.*, p. 52, the fifth ictus rests upon the

TABLE V

	Complete Lines												Feet 1-4						Feet 5-6											
	I				II				III				I			II			III			I			II			III		
	I		II		III		I		II		III		I		II		III		I		II		III		I		II		III	
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	III	
Ennius {Syllable- groups... {Words.....	28	72	50	50	69	31	30	70	42	58	63	37	25	75	95	5	95	5	95	5	95	5	95	5	95	5	95	5	5	
	37	63	55	45	62	38	56	44	35	65	50	50	3	97	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
		- 9	5	- 7	- 7	- 7	- 26	- 7	- 26	- 7	- 13	- 13		22	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Catullus {Syllable- groups... {Words.....	30	70	50	50	68	32	29	71	40	60	58	42	32	68	91	9	91	9	91	9	91	9	91	9	91	9	91	9	1	
	38	62	67	33	91	9	68	32	63	37	76	24	.3	99.7	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	97.5	2.5	100	
		- 8	17	23	23	23	- 38	23	- 38	23	18	18		31.7	6.5	1	6.5	1	6.5	1	6.5	1	6.5	1	6.5	1	6.5	1	1	
Lucretius {Syllable- groups... {Words.....	27	73	50	50	71	29	27	73	40	60	62	38	28	72	99	1	99	1	99	1	99	1	99	1	99	1	99	1	100	
	37	63	67	33	83	17	61	39	52	48	81	19	.4	99.6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
		- 10	17	12	12	12	- 34	12	- 34	12	19	19		27.6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	100	
Vergil {Syllable- groups... {Words.....	27	73	50	50	72	28	27	73	40	60	63	37	27	73	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
	36	64	63	37	83	17	61	39	46	54	81	19		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
		- 9	13	11	11	11	- 34	6	- 34	6	18	18		27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	

ultima of a dissyllable or polysyllable in only 5.2 per cent of Ennius' verses, and only four-tenths of one per cent of the time in Lucretius and Vergil. My count gives 1.73 per cent for Catullus. This increasing avoidance of line-ends such as *ignís mare férrum, mortálés perhibébant, amatorém quod amíci, Tuditanó colléga* must have been due to the effort to make accent and ictus rest upon the same syllable.

Table V shows further a very striking tendency to favor ictus of the ultima of spondaic words in the first four feet. This tendency is no doubt partly due to the restriction of words of the rhythms $\cup \simeq$ and $\cup \cup \simeq$ to this part of the verse; for a spondaic word standing next to one of them must ordinarily have the ictus on the ultima; for example, *Tyriás olím, currús fuit, mihí causás memorá*. But words beginning with one or two short syllables are too few to account for so great an excess of spondees with accented ultima as we actually find. Besides many a line could easily be shifted so as to put the ictus on the penult instead of the ultima of a spondaic word. The following lines of the first book of the *Aeneid* might have run:

1 Árna virúmque canó qui Tróiaé prímus ab óris,
50 Tália sécum flámmató dea córde volútans

instead of *tália flámmató secum*,

104 Rémi fránguntúr; tum próra avértit et úndis

instead of *fránguntúr remí*,

159 Êst locus ín secéssu lóngo: ínsula pórtum

instead of *ést in sécessú longó locus*,

167 Dúlces íntus aquáe vivóque sedflia sáxo

instead of *íntus aquáe dulcés*.

Similar easy shifts would avoid a clash of accent and ictus in a spondaic word in lines 8, 32, 35, 53, 64, 68, 69, 72. There may be objections to these specific changes; but if such alterations are so easy, Vergil could undoubtedly have found many which were free from objection if he had desired. It seems necessary to conclude that the dactylic poets preferred frequent clash of accent and ictus in the first four feet, at least in the case of spondaic words.

Some will criticize my discussion of the first four feet (particularly some of the suggested rearrangements of Vergilian lines) because no account has been taken of the caesura. I have two lines of defense against such an attack. It is likely that the position and character of the caesura was dependent on considerations of accent (compare Lucian Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 200). For example, the Roman preference for the masculine caesura was probably due to a desire for conflict between accent and ictus at that point in the verse. Even if there should prove to have been some other cause for this deviation from Greek usage, that other cause, not the position of the caesura, would have to be taken into account in our investigation.

In the second place, if I had taken account of the caesura it would not materially have changed the complexion of the figures. The alterations would have been confined to Table VI, and there would have affected only the first six columns. I have made the calculations for the first four feet in Vergil, with these results:

	- ~		- - ~		- - - ~	
	I	II	II	III	II	III
Syllable-groups	32	68	39	61	42	58
Words.....	61	39 -29	46 7	54	81 31	19

All of the above remarks apply to these figures as well as to those given in Table V.

It is quite clear, then, that the dactylic poets tried to secure harmony of accent and ictus in the last two feet of the verse; and this effort was stronger, or at least more successful, with the later poets than with Ennius. It seems likely that Ennius, like Plautus and Terence, would have preferred harmony of accent and ictus throughout the verse; but since that was impossible in the hexameter he gained much the same effect by preserving fairly regular harmony in the last two feet. Ennius seems thereupon to have made a virtue of necessity and to have employed clash of accent and ictus in the first four feet to help give his language that air of aloofness from ordinary speech which he regarded as essential to heroic verse.

The later dactylic poets seem to have confined this device to spondaic words, but in this limited field they employed it even more than Ennius had done.¹

If the dactylic poets cared to secure harmony of accent and ictus in the last two feet of the line, or if they aimed at any particular relation of accent and ictus in any part of the line, it follows that both accent and ictus involved stress. The Latin accent, in classical times as well as in the early period, was in part a stress accent.

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¹ Possibly the reason why Latin poets could employ familiar prosaic phrases was that a clash between accent and ictus removed them from their commonplace associations. At any rate Vergil has such a clash in the phrase (*Aen.* i. 207): *rebús serváte secúndis*, and Horace in (*Carm.* i. 14. 2) *Ó quid agís ?* (*Carm.* iii. 5. 42) *capítis mínór*, etc.